



NEWS RELEASE

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Remarks by

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NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION
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MR-3

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

The historic Project Mercury flight on last Friday was a dramatic demonstration before the eyes of the world of how the United States Space team, through effective large-scale organized effort can pass one very important milestone on the long road toward the mastery of the space environment by man.

Symbolic of the successful solution of every problem and the accomplishment of every necessity to earn the Navy "Well Done" or the NASA "A-OK" is the man you desire to question, Alan B. Shepard, Jr.

But before you do, let me give you a figure or two to indicate what it means to ride a rocket.

A chronology published by the Congress shows:*

That with respect to the V-2 rocket in Germany in 1942, out of 7 launchings only one succeeded. In 1943 out of 24, only 4 succeeded. After thousands of launches during the war the record of the V-2 rockets built in the United States left much to be desired.

With respect to the Jupiter rocket, out of the first 10 launchings 7 succeeded; out of the second 10, 8 succeeded; and out of the last 4 every one succeeded.

* "A Chronology of Missile and Astronautic Events", Report of the Committee on Science and Astronautics, House of Representatives, Washington, 1961.

With respect to the Thor rocket, out of the first ten, four succeeded; after 40 firings of Thor the next ten (from 40 to 50) all succeeded.

With respect to the Atlas rocket, out of the first ten, five succeeded; out of the ten from 20 to 30, all succeeded; but out of the 10 from 40 to 50, six succeeded and four failed.

With respect to the Polaris rocket, out of the first ten, five succeeded; out of the ten from 40 to 50, seven succeeded; but out of the ten from 70 to 80, nine succeeded.

The lesson is clear. If we are to have our spectacular successes, openly arrived at, with ever larger and ever more complex rockets, the early test flights, unmanned of course, will involve some spectacular failures. In the drama of the countdown, we will never know which it is to be. But to keep perspective, I should tell you that, as we did in planning Project Mercury, this lack of rocket perfection will be taken into account in manned flights by providing an escape system for the astronaut in event of the failure of the rocket.

In thrust, the first stage of Saturn is 20 times the Redstone, and we will test-fly it this year. In thrust, the first stage of Nova is estimated at 100 times the Redstone, and we are already testing one of its engines. The complete Nova will likely measure two-thirds as tall as the Washington Monument.

From all we know about the past, a portion of the early test flights of these gigantic rockets will appear as failures to those who view and read about them. To the space scientist and engineer, however, they will provide the knowledge, the experimental proof of technology we cannot fail to master and still survive.

In the months ahead, when you see on your TV, the launchings of the brave men who sit beside Alan Shepard here today, it may be well to remember this record. Even with our best efforts no specific flight can be guaranteed absolutely safe, but from every flight comes more knowledge to advance our progress in space.

Now, to make the proper introduction, I present the Director of NASA's Space Task Group, responsible for Project Mercury, a man who knows how it feels to send a man to ride a rocket, Robert R. Gilruth.